United Nations E/2006/NGO/13

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
21 April 2006

Original: English

Substantive session of 2006
New York, 3-28 July 2006
Item 2 of the provisional agenda*
Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development

Statement submitted by Tamana Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2006/100.

06-32164 (E) 110506

Statement

Tamana's Sheltered Workshops — Incorporating the U.N. theme

Tamana, a non-profit voluntary association was created solely for the purpose of providing the best professional help to children and adults with developmental and multiple disabilities, minimal brain damage and autism; providing a holistic developmental education to children with special needs, to effect optimum adult habilitation.

The economic empowerment of people with disabilities is key to independent living and sustainable livelihoods. To ensure this, "The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995" came into force on February 7, 1996 in India. This law was an important landmark and a significant step in the direction of ensuring equal opportunities for people with disabilities and their full participation in the nation building. The Act provides for both preventive and promotional aspects of rehabilitation like education, employment and vocational training, job reservation, manpower development, creation of barrier-free environment, etc.

Ten years after the Persons with Disability Act was passed in India, mainstreaming disability into critical areas such as employment, education and barrier-free access remains lacking. While in the past 12 years in India, disability has emerged as an important issue of public policy discourse, the implementation of legislation and institutional mechanisms, both government and non-government, has been poor.

Even though disabled people constitute a significant 5 to 6 percentage of the population of India, their needs for meaningful employment remain unmet. Consequently, it is up to the stakeholders to ensure that those initiatives and schemes that do exist are taken advantage of. NGOs and others working in the development sector have to internalize provisions of the disabled in the development system.

Tamana's aims and objectives are geared towards mainstreaming the disabled in the wider society. In today's world, where each person is looking for better job prospects, it is an irony that the mentally challenged individuals find themselves at cross roads not knowing what to do or how to engage themselves after the basic schooling and vocational training. Trained special needs persons are unable to obtain jobs in industry and commercial establishments in wider society because of the negative attitude of the employer to employ mentally disabled. The major barrier to employment for these individuals continue to be attitudinal barriers; stereotypical thinking and assumption about what people with disabilities can and can't do.

Tamana felt the need and set up sheltered workshops where vocational training along with employment could be a step towards economic rehabilitation. The philosophy behind the sheltered workshops is to make our students productive members of society and to teach them work place ethics.

Tamana set up two sheltered workshops in July 2005 – Bakery at Tamana's Vocational Center for young adults and Laundry at Tamana Special School. Simple steps have been devised for teaching baking and laundry to individuals with special needs which take into account their abilities and limitations.

The sales of baked products and providing Laundry services to Beauty parlours and neighbourhood motels has lead to greater self-sufficiency at student and institutional level. **The students have started rebuilding their self-esteem and fulfilling their emotional needs. Presently 20 students are employed in the bakery unit and 10 in the Laundry. These models workshops can easily be replicated in the local community of the students and are being projected to parents as simple avenues for self-employment.**